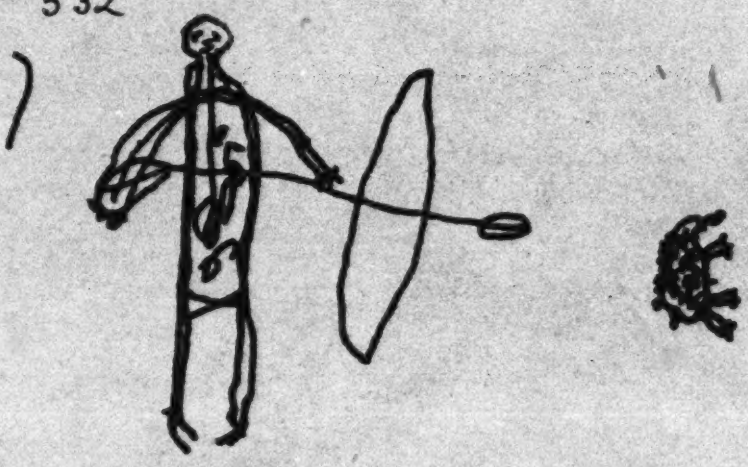
532



Indian hunting peccaries with bow and arrow. Drawing by a Sanemá Indian.

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978
775

The hikuladé of the priest. Drawing by a Sanemá Indian. 1/1

[See explanation of this figure on p. 99 --Anj

/222 cont./

793 the men learn because of the frequency with which he sings them.
773 He sings during the day, but especially at night. Suddenly he
[776] interrupts his song and flies up into the sky, where he joins other hɛwĩawán in order to sup with Omao.

793 The hɛwĩawán must jealously keep a certain number of
784 taboos, and on the degree of care with which he keeps them
[262] depends, not only his power as a priest, but also the existence of all his people. Thus, for example, he must not eat crabs or other animals which in reality are men to them, just like eagles, etc.

• [778] Should he do this, the "weight of the dead" kills his
[726] hikuladɛ, a disaster which, in turn, causes the death, not only of the priest, but also of a large part of his congregation. For the same reason, the hɛwĩawán never takes part in war or in any combat whatsoever, because, although he is invulnerable and no arrow or club can kill him, his hikuladɛ could not bear the "weight" of a man killed by his weapons. This is the reason why each Sanemá local group relies on a special chief for wartime.

793 The hɛwĩawán, who belongs to the court of Omao more than
[776] to the Sanemá community, does not marry a specific woman.
[836] He may have sexual relations with all the unmarried women of the group, but he is completely unconcerned about them and the children. He has no duties as either husband or father.

/223/ If a hɛwĩawán dies, any woman of the group may
[776] have a son predestined to be a hɛwĩawán. No one knows which
[781] of the boys born in the period immediately after the death of a priest may be the hɛwĩawán of the future, but one day the true hɛwĩawán will return from the forest where he has met the Great Jaguar, who changed him into a priest, replacing his human flesh with other flesh more worthy of his bones, the flesh of a bat-priest.

[771] He than informs the people of what has happened, and, as that election happens shortly after the death of a priest, the new hɛwĩawán tries to take the vacant place in time, assuring, in this manner, the continuation of uninterrupted contact which the Sanemá have had with Omao generation after generation.

/223 cont./

776 The Great Jaguar has certain relations with Omao, the
793 deified hero of the Sanemá, since his name, "Omao-kõhe," indicates such a relationship, and it is possible perhaps to speak of a vocation for the office of priest, since the Sanemá Supreme Being admits him, after his encounter with the Great Jaguar, into the court of Omao.

793 According to South American ethnology, it is surprising
171 to find a "specialist" in a nomadic preagricultural society, but, as we shall state below, this is the second time that we have found a similar case in Venezuela; the other one was that of the Warao wiʃiráto.

793 The Sanema priest is a member of the court of Omao, not
776 only because the Great Jaguar changed him into a bat, but also
778 because Omao gave him a hikuladɛ which is invisible, although it has a spherical shape like a ball, and the larger the hikuladɛ, the more powerful the priest.

The hikuladɛ of the priest, the informant explained, is like a globe which the hɛwĩawãn keeps in his chest. We shall also see later that the other religious practitioner of the Sanema has a hikuladɛ too, but one which is essentially different. We
793 have the impression that the hikuladɛ of the priest contains "the
778 souls" of the ancestors who were destined by Omao to live there
775 and help the priest. Since the data obtained are, in our opinion,
793 insufficient, we do not want to hazard peremptory statements,
778 but it seems certain that the Sanemá priest also cures the sick,
755 particularly those who are suffering from fever. Our informant
[114] explained to us that the ancestors (hikula-dĩb), the people of the
[775] hikuladɛ of the priest, are the ones who cure the fever when the priest brings the hikuladɛ out of his chest and deposits it for a time on the body of the patient.

Sometimes the desired effect is not attained, and that indicates that the soul of the /224/ victim has already abandoned the
793 body and does not want to return. The hĩkula therefore constitute
778 a sort of supernatural "little pueblo" /pueblecito/ within the
628 Sanemá community in which the priest lives and do not wish to have any communication with the kĩkula-dib /sic/ of the neighboring pueblo. The priests from nearby pueblos do not visit each

/224 cont./

793 778 628 776 other, for they would begin to fight each other until one of them lay inert on the ground, exhausted and overcome. But they do not kill each other. Only in the house of Omao may all the hɛ̃wĩawán gather with their hĩkula-dĩb.

793 778 775 The hĩkula-dĩb of a priest act exclusively in his rancheria, in other words, in the rancheria of the priest who figures in the house of Omao as the representative of his particular terrestial community, and for this reason more than one priest is unnecessary. In the section of the illustrations[7] one can see the 532 793 778 775 127 hikuladɛ̃ of a priest, drawn by one of our informants. One sees there five hĩkula-dĩb, or souls of ancestors of the group in which the priest acts. The uppermost figure represents fever. In the center one can see a quadrangular figure which is a house. One of the beings who is inside it is the priest, but what can be seen on the left side is a coleopteran, a scarab. Under the house is seen the heart of the priest.

The informant, after having drawn the figure, insisted emphatically that we tear it up, and he suffered some anguish for having given it to us. After several days had passed, I took him the drawing in order to ask for more details and found him 532 793 778 775 126 825 calm and unworried. The reason for suffering this anguish is based on the belief that a Sanemá must never speak of the insect of the house of the hikuladɛ̃. As a matter of fact our informant never mentioned its name. I identified the insect as a scarab on the basis of the descriptions that he gave us and because it was not the first time that I had heard the scarab or other coleopterans mentioned as a supernatural being in South American ethnology.

171 773 825 778 Such is the belief of the Lengua of the Gran Chaco, who affirm that the Great Scarab created the universe and peopled it with spirits and men. The Toba, also of the Chaco, call it payak, a name which means spirit; and it is interesting with regard to the hĩkuladɛ̃ of the Sanemá priest to note the Mataco custom of attributing a supernatural power to a maraca /gourd rattle/ with sacred beetles (Metraux, 1946d, pp. 350, 352, 353, 367). The similarity between the hikuladɛ̃ of the Sanemá and the "sacred maraca" of many South American tribes is very symptomatic.

7 [See p. 70 - -Analyst]

/225 cont./ The Sanemá say that the
793 hɐwĭawán kills vultures and sparrow hawks on his travels (Becher,
825 1960, p. 96). As we have already explained in another section of this chapter, the Sanemá believe that the eagle and other birds of prey are "men" who can be killed only if they belong to an enemy tribe.

793 The hikuladɐ offers the priest the possibility of flying to the
● 798 house of Omao. In order that I might understand him better and
[796] not doubt his veracity, the native making the drawing fixed a
126 propeller to the mysterious sphere. One might say that the
[795] hɐwĭawán is carrying the soul of a dead person to the house of Omao.

756 The second religious practitioner of the Sanemá is a shaman, who is called sablĭ. The supernatural world over which he has power is different from the world of the priest, and therefore his function is different from that of the former.

[533] In order to become a shaman, the candidate must submit to a very rigorous training under the guidance of an old sablĭ who knows how to sing the "Great Kɐɐ."

756 /226/ During the period of apprenticeship, which lasts
276 several weeks, the candidate takes yopo continually through a
262 tube or simply with the hand, eats very little and only the food
515 prescribed; he does not bathe and almost does not speak. Among
123 the Waica of the Upper Orinoco I saw a group of these candidates who gave me a depressing impression since they showed prolonged suffering as a result of the consumption of the drug. We were not able to speak with them, and we were not allowed to take blood samples from them as we did with the other members of the rancheria.

756 It seems that all the men are potentially sablĭes, but
533 among them there are some who are very strong and others who
794 are weak, and only the strongest ones are able to sing the "kɐɐ" well. This song is rendered by the sablĭ at the end of his period of instruction, when the candidates are prepared and ready to receive the hĭkulas, or "specific vital principles" of the species of flora and fauna, with the exception of fish. As soon as they hear the call of their master, they obey and go toward his locality, where they find the sablĭ candidate waiting for them to enter his

/226 cont./

756 chest. They enter, without loss of time, through the extremi-
533 ties of the body and through the head. They arrive in the order
774 in which their names are sung by the master sablf, who in this way "builds a pueblo" of a microcosmos in the body of the man. The stronger the master, the greater will be the "pueblo," and the greater this "pueblo" is, the better chance the sablf will have to augment his inner world and his power during his life.

756 The hikuladi of the sablf is essentially different from that
774 of the priest, in the sense that it is inhabited by the vital prin-
[778] ciple of vegetable and animal species and not by the souls of departed ancestors. The man also has a specific hfkula, different from his soul and which, as is true of the vegetable and animal kingdoms, seems to be immortal and spiritual, essentially joined to animate matter until death. Each specimen of a species has a specific hfkula; after death, the speciman goes to a luminous place in the forest. While the soul of a man may abandon the body during sleep, etc., without its being detrimental for the man himself, the hfkula never leaves until the moment of death. Furthermore, the soul is typically human, while the hfkula is found in man and also in plants and animals. Some informed us with insistence that women and small children do not have hfkula.

773 Here is the story which explains the origin and the nature
774 of the hfkula in the animate world.

[776] Chinanfdmawan is a gigantic demon of dreadful shape, with long, sharp claws. He has skin which is impenetrable and as hard as rock.

/227/ One day Chinanfdmawan came to attack the Sanemá. The latter posted themselves with their weapons to face his attack. Soon, however, the Sanemá realized that arrows and lances had no effect on the demon, who captured most of his enemies. Chinanfdmawan quartered and devoured his victims, but kept the skins, which he nailed out on boards around and inside his house.
[171] (It is extremely interesting that this custom of keeping the skin
[727] of enemies has been preserved in Sanemá mythology, since it is reminiscent of some tribes of the Cauca, in Colombia, of the Mauta of Ecuador, of the Huauca of Peru, and of the Inca. It also recalls the cult of Xipe in Central America.)

/228 cont./

756 The Sanemá sablf has great power over animals and plants
●778 represented in his hikuladɨ, with which he communicates while
825 he is asleep. If he should dream about a dangerous animal, a
[533] jaguar for instance, he makes him sit down in order to begin the song ɔ̃kamɔ̃ against jaguars. This song keeps the jaguar from the rancheria, but, when it is relatively near, the hikuladɨ of the sablf goes out to kill the jaguar in the forest, where the hunters will find him dead on the following day. But if the men sent by the sablf do not find the body of the jaguar, everybody remains in the rancheria on the following day, for they fear that the Great Jaguar may be in the forest and will kill anybody found in his way.

756 The sablfes sing almost every night, and the bigger the
533 animal who appears to them in their dreams, the more intense
754 is the song. In this songs, the sablf can send any hfkula from
[825] his chest to go and kill a man in a foreign rancheria, however
[774] far it is. Usually he does this at night, and on the following day the victim's companions find him dead in his hammock.

774 I have the impression that the hfkulas belonging to the
756 various species are, of themselves, absolutely passive and that they behave in an active way only at the command and wish
[754] of the sablf. Most sicknesses, including death, are caused by a
[753] hfkula introduced into the body of the man by the intervention
[761] of the sablf and by his magical power.

756 The priest sablf, influenced by the effects of yopo, shouts,
755 sings, and dances around the patient. With this he attempts to scare
774 off the harmful hfkula which is striving to enter the body of the man. It is very often personified by a man who is symbolically fought by the hfkula of the sablf and others chosen from his "pueblo of hfkula" in his chest. The curative art of the sablf depends to a great degree on his diagnosis, according to which he chooses from his great hfkula in his chest those which, by their skill, can combat the hfkula or hfkulas causing the sickness. It goes without saying that a young and inexperienced sablf makes mistakes in his diagnosis of identifying, from among all the possible thousands, the hfkula which is causing the sickness sent by an enemy. It